

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03

INR-07 NSAE-00 RSC-01 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 SP-02

CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 L-02

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-06 DOTE-00 FMC-01

CG-00 COA-01 DLOS-03 OPR-01 NIC-01 FEAE-00 AS-01 /090 W

----- 009166

R 031638Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4276

INFO AMCONGEN GUAYAQUIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 QUITO 0795

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, EC

SUBJECT: RECENT DISTURBANCES IN MANTA

REF: QUITO 696, 731

1. SUMMARY EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER SPENT JANUARY 29TH AND 30 IN PORTOVIEJO (CAPITAL OF MANABI PROVINCE) AND MANTA, SCENE OF RECENT DISTURBANCES AND GENERAL STRIKE (REFTELS). MANTA, ECUADOR'S SECOND PORT (IN TERMS OF GROSS TONNAGE HANDLED) AND SIXTH LARGEST CITY, WAS VIRTUALLY PARALYZED FOR FOUR DAYS IN PROTEST OVER FAILURE OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT TO MAKE AVAILABLE LONG-PROMISED FUNDS FOR BADLY NEEDED PUBLIC WORKS, ROAD CONSTRUCTION, SEWAGE AND STORM DRAINAGE, SCHOOLS, HOUSING, AND PUBLIC HEALTH FACILITIES. DEMONSTRATIONS HAVE NO DIRECT IMPACT ON US INTERESTS, BUT MAY BE A FORERUNNER OF FUTURE PROBLEMS THAT GOE MAY HAVE TO COPE WITH IN THE FACE OF MOUNTING PUBLIC FRUSTRATION OVER SOARING COST OF LIVING, AND SLOW PACE WITH WHICH OIL REVENUES ARE TRICKLING OUT OF NATIONAL TREASURY AND INTO PUBLIC WORKS OUTSIDE OF QUITO AND GUAYAQUIL. ALTHOUGH MANTA WAS BOUGHT OFF WITH A PROMISE

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OF \$2 MILLION TO BE IMMEDIATELY FORTHCOMING FOR THE NEEDED

PUBLIC WORKS, THE STRIKE PROVOKED A SHARP RETORT FROM THE SECRETARIAT OF INFORMATION AS WELL AS AN EDITORIAL IN EL COMERCIO OF 1 FEBRUARY THAT WARNED THAT MANTA-TYPE PROTESTS WERE NOT THE WAY TO GO ABOUT SOLVING PROBLEMS THE COUNTRY FACES. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER SPENT JANUARY 29TH AND 30TH IN MANTA AND PORTOVIEJO, THE FORMER THE LOCUS OF RECENT DISTURBANCES. MANTA IS ECUADOR'S SECOND LARGEST PORT, THROUGH WHICH A GREAT DEAL OF EQUIPMENT DESTINED FOR OIL FIELDS IN THE ORIENTE ENTERS THE COUNTRY; IT IS ALSO MUCH CLOSER TO QUITO THAN GUAYAQUIL, AND BEING A NEW (1964-69 AND QUITE MODERN PORT, AN INCREASING PROPORTION OF GOODS DESTINED FOR THE CAPITAL ENTER THERE. IT HAS RISEN TO BECOME ECUADOR'S SIXTH LARGEST CITY, AND IS A BOOMING COMMERCIAL CENTER.

3. POLOFF SPOKE TO, AMONG OTHERS, EC NAVY CAPTAIN GILBERTO ABARCA, CAPTAIN OF THE PORT; RAMON GONZALEZ-ARTIGAS, MANAGER OF THE DEL MONTE TUNA PROCESSING PLANT; VICTOR MOLINA, VICE MAYOR OF MANTA (AND IN CHARGE OF CITY AFFAIRS, IN THE ABSENCE OF MAYOR HORACIO CANTOS); JORGE MOLINA, MANAGER OF THE LARGEST HOTEL; AND IN PORTOVIEJO, WITH THE GOVERNOR OF THE PROVINCE, EC ARMY LTC ANIBAL ZUMARRAGA; THE MANABI PROVINCE PREFECT, ENRIQUE DELGADO.

4. THE DISTURBANCES WERE CLEARLY LOCALLY-INSPIRED AND RELATED TO LOCAL ISSUES. AS THE PORT THROUGH WHICH BOTH OIL DRILLING AND FIELD EQUIPMENT DESTINED FOR THE ORIENTE, AND CONSUMER GOODS (PARTICULARLY CARS) DESTINED FOR QUITO, ENTER THE COUNTRY, MANTANS ARE INCREASINGLY AWARE OF THE AMOUNT OF MONEY, PRINCIPALLY OIL REVENUES, AVAILABLE TO THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. AT THE SAME TIME, THEY ARE ACUTELY AWARE HOW LITTLE OF THE MONEY IS BEING DISTRIBUTED OUTSIDE QUITO (AND TO A LESSER DEGREE, GUAYAQUIL). MANTA, BETTER OFF THAN MANY ECUADOREAN CITIES, STILL HAS NO MUNICIPAL TRASH COLLECTION OR SEWAGE TREATMENT; ONLY A VERY POORLY-EQUIPPED HOSPITAL; NO UNIVERSITY OR COLLEGE; INADEQUATE SCHOOLS, CLINICS, PUBLIC HEALTH AND SANITATION FACILITIES. THERE IS ONLY ONE REAL PAVED THOROUGHFARE IN TOWN, AND

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BECAUSE OF DRAINAGE AND SANITATION PROBLEMS, MOST OF ITS STREETS ARE VIRTUALLY QUAGMIRE, FESTERING WITH GARBAGE AND DISEASE. THE PRINCIPAL HIGHWAY OUT OF TOWN, TO GUAYAQUIL, LOOKS LIKE THE ARMY'S TANK PROVING GROUNDS FOR MUCH OF ITS 80 POT-HOLED MILES (A FOUR-HOUR DRIVE).

5. THUS, MANTANS FEEL THEY HAVE QUITE LEGITIMATE GRIEVANCES WHICH ARE PAID NO ATTENTION TO BY THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT.

MANTA WANTS ITS SHARE OF THE OIL REVENUES, AND THE FRUSTRATIONS, WHICH HAVE BEEN MOUNTING FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, FINALLY ERUPTED ON JANUARY 27TH, AND COMPLETELY SHUT BOTH TOWN AND PORT UNTIL THEY ENDED JANUARY 31ST. BOTH TUNA PROCESSING PLANTS WERE CLOSED, AND TUNA FISHING FLEET WAS IN THE HARBOR DESPITE THE BEST RUN OF FISH IN NEARLY THREE YEARS IN THE WATERS OFF-SHORE. THE PORT WAS PARALYZED, AND ACCORDING TO PORT CAPTAIN ABARCA, 9 CARGO SHIPS WERE DIVERTED TO GUAYAQUIL AND ESMERALDAS. ALTHOUGH EMBOFF WAS ABLE TO ENTER TOWN WITHOUT DIFFICULTY, THERE WERE SEVERAL DOZEN PLACES ALONG THE ROAD WHERE BARRICADES AND BONFIRES HAD OBVIOUSLY BEEN SET TO HALT TRAFFIC. UPON DEPARTURE THE 30TH (DAY AFTER THE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED THAT THE STRIKE WAS OVER AND SITUATION RETURNED TO NORMAL), TWO ROADBLOCKS HAD TO BE NEGOTIATED, WITH BONFIRES BURNING, TRAFFIC TURNED BACK, AND ANGRY CROWDS READY TO STONE ANYONE TRYING TO GET THROUGH.

6. ALL OFFICIALS SPOKEN TO (PARA 3), WHETHER FROM MANTA OR THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT, AGREED THAT THIS WAS THE RESULT OF MONTHS OF INACTIVITY ON PART OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. NO ONE (INCLUDING MANTA PARTISANS) BELIEVED THERE WAS ANY SIGNIFICANT ORGANIZED POLITICAL FORCE BEHIND IT, BUT RATHER THAT IT WAS AN AD HOC COALESCING OF INTEREST GROUPS --CHAUFFEURS' UNIONS, DOCTORS, LAWYERS, BUSINESSMEN, ETC. NOR DID MANTA OFFICIALS FAULT THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT. PROVINCE GOVERNOR, ZUMARRAGA, THOUGHT DEMONSTRATIONS WOULD STRENGTHEN HIS HAND IN DEALING WITH THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT.

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03

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NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-06 DOTE-00 FMC-01

CG-00 COA-01 DLOS-03 OPR-01 NIC-01 FEAE-00 AS-01 /090 W

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R 031638Z FEB 75  
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4277  
INFO AMCONGEN GUAYAQUIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 QUITO 0795

7. JANUARY 30TH, MAYOR HORACIO CANTOS AND MOST OF THE MANTA CITY COUNCIL MET WITH ZUMARRAGA ABOUT MANTA'S DEMANDS. ZUMARRAGA HAD BY THEN BEEN AUTHORIZED BY QUITO AUTHORITIES TO ACCEDE TO VIRTUALLY ALL OF THEM, AND HAD BEEN PROMISED IMMEDIATE FUNDS (\$2 MILLION, 50 MILLION SUCRES) TO COVER THE PROVINCE'S NEEDS. ZUMARRAGA AND MAYOR CANTOS ISSUED A JOINT ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE AGREEMENT WHICH HAS APPARENTLY DEFUSED THE ISSUE FOR THE MOMENT.

8. STILL IN CONTENTION IS THE DISPOSITION OF THE RING-LEADERS OF THE STRIKE, A NUMBER OF WHOM (ESTIMATED FROM 6 TO 18) WERE DETAINED BY THE GOVERNMENT AT THE HEIGHT OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS. MANTA VICE-MAYOR MOLINA SPECIFICALLY DECLINED TO USE THE WORD "ARREST" (ALTHOUGH PRESUMABLY SYMPATHETIC TO THE PROTESTERS), INSISTING INSTEAD ON "DETENTION", AND SEEMED CONFIDENT THAT THEY WOULD BE RELEASED AFTER A FEW DAYS OR WEEKS. WE UNDERSTAND THAT SOME OF THE MOST INSTRUMENTAL HAVE BEEN INCARCERATED IN QUITO'S SAN GREGORIO PRISON.

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9. COMMENT: THE US HAS NOT BEEN AN ISSUE IN THE MANTA DISTURBANCES, DESPITE THE FACT THAT MANTA IS A FISHING CITY WITH A TUNA FLEET THAT HAS IN THE PAST EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE THREAT FROM LARGE, SUPER-EFFICIENT US PURSE-SEINERS. THE ISSUES AT STAKE WERE LOCAL, BUT THEY COULD BE A FORERUNNER OF GROWING UNREST IN TOWNS AND CITIES OUTSIDE QUITO AND GUAYAQUIL AS IT BECOMES MORE AND MORE APPARENT THAT OIL REVENUES JUST AREN'T GETTING SPREAD AROUND YET. THERE IS STILL VERY LITTLE THAT EVEN WIDESPREAD PUBLIC DISORDERS COULD DO TO DIRECTLY THREATEN THE PRESENT GOE, UNLESS DISCONTENT OVER THE SOARING COST OF LIVING, LAGGING PUBLIC WORKS, SANITATION AND HEALTH LEADS TO DISTURBANCES IN QUITO/GUAYAQUIL, OR BECOMES SUFFICIENTLY SERIOUS TO TRIGGER A REACTION WITHIN THE MILITARY. WE SEE NO REASON AT PRESENT TO BELIEVE THAT THIS WILL OCCUR. THE GOVERNMENT'S REACTION IN PROVIDING THE SOUGHT-AFTER FUNDS IS BUT ONE IN A SERIES IN RECENT MONTHS THAT ILLUSTRATES BOTH THE DETERMINATION AND THE ABILITY OF THE GOE TO BUY ITS WAY OUT OF PRACTICALLY ANY

PROBLEM WHICH IT FACES, WHICH IT CONSIDERS TO BE POLITICALLY  
THREATENING.  
BREWSTER

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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
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